

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

established 1904.

BULLETIN

<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasfield.html>

Editor : Don Hird. (email hird@primus.com.au)

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The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal *The Tasmanian Naturalist* annually in October. People with a range of ages, background and knowledge are welcome as members.

Contact Genevieve Gates (6227 8638) for further information or write to GPO Box 68A, Hobart, 7001.

Programme

General Meetings start at 7.45 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting outside the to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery entrance in Macquarie Street. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear.

If you are planning to attend an outing but have not been to the prior meeting, phone to check as to the timing of the excursion (with Genevieve Gates; 62 278 638 or Don Hird; 62 344 293). Unforeseen changes sometimes occur.

Thurs. 2 August. 7.45p.m.: Karen Edyvane, Dept. Primary Industry, Water & Environment (DPIWE), will speak **Giant Kelp**, its ecology and conservation status.

Sat. 4 Aug. Excurs. Meet at The Museum at 8.30 a.m. to travel to Kettering to take the 9.30 a.m. Ferry to Bruny Island where we will take the walk to Cape Queen Elizabeth (formerly Cape Trobriand), at the north end of Adventure Bay. This walk affords fine views and traverses a range of interesting coastal habitats. Although we will overlook nearby kelp fields, close inspection will be optional !

Thurs. 6 September Paul Hedge, a Project Officer with DPIWE, will speak on yet another pestilential introduced species; Rice Grass.

Sun. 9 Sept. Excurs. 9.00 a.m.: Little Swanport is both a location to view the effects of Rice Grass on estuarine environments and a fine spring venue in itself.

Thurs. 4 October 7.45p.m.: Les Rubenach, a member of this club and expert photographer, will speak on Orchids.

Sat. 6 Oct. Excurs. 9.00 a.m.: Several locations within easy reach of Hobart will be visited as orchids are often site-specific. Most likely we will start at Waverly Flora Park and finish in the Pelverata area with another orchid site in between.

Thurs. 1 November 7.45p.m.: Pat Quilty will speak on aspects of Antarctic biology with special reference to geology and fossils.

Friday to Sunday, 2-4 November **SGAP Flower Show**

This year's theme is *Gondwana*. We aim to provide a small exhibition of our activities and specimens. *In lieu of an excursion we will attend to our exhibit.*

Jewel Beetles of Tasmania, our latest publication, is available for \$10 until the end of August.

FEDERATION WEEKEND 21-23 SEPTEMBER

This meeting will be hosted by the Central North Field Nats and held at the Arm River Camp facilities in NW Tasmania. As usual a full and interesting range of activities as well as social interaction with other Tasmanian Naturalists will be on offer.

SEPTEMBER – Biodiversity Month

A detailed kit of activities and information on **Biodiversity** will be available at the next two meetings.

Our *Conservation Policy* is under continuing development. An early draft is on our website. See a committee member is you wish to be involved.

Excursion Reports

FIELD TRIP TO YARLINGTON TIER RAINFOREST SITE

Report by Robin Cribbes

On Sunday 4th February, five of us met at the agreed meeting place for the excursion to see the remnant rain forest at Yarlington Tier. The bulletin promised us a “short scrubby walk”, a wonderful piece of hyperbole. The ground was littered with huge fallen trees and boulders of various sizes and I can truly say I fell over every one of them. The rest of the party leapt over them like mountain goats.

We crossed a large sphagnum bog surrounding the remnant rain forest which was absolutely fascinating as each footfall sank at least 20cm into the moss and you could see all the footsteps ahead very clearly. This stopped me getting lost while I was following the coo-ees from the advance party.

When we got there I was surprised at how small the remnant was. There were only a few species of trees, the names of which I can't remember (and guess what, my field guides were in the car. Where else?). It was surprisingly quiet with very few bird sounds.

We moved off from there for Kevin to search for his snails, Spider Bob his millipedes and Don his dung beetles, his particular interest being the different species of beetles to be found in the different marsupial scats. He found some wombat scats which when broken open showed evidence of beetles and there were plenty of possum scats with beetles. Spider Bob found the particular millipedes he was looking for, he sends them to a colleague in Chicago for DNA testing as part of a program he is conducting. He explained that Tasmania is fascinating to naturalists as there is little movement of species between the east and west of the island. Kevin found a bit of everything, even some millipedes for Bob, and showed me a beautiful velvet worm, which was irresistible to touch.

For the return journey I was thankful that we avoided the sphagnum bog but I fell over anyway and we got back to our cars tired but happy.

T.F.N.C. Outing to Collins Cap on 3rd March 2001.

Saturday, 3.3.01 was a perfect day for climbing Collins Cap, a clear mild day with no wind. Twelve of us in three cars left the museum at 9am and started the walk at the end of Suhr's Rd. near the settlement of Collins Cap. This is an alternative route to the more usual way up Myrtle Forest.

Perhaps Field Naturalists aren't meant to be observing domestic pigs but the piggery at the start provided much amusement, especially the piglets! A Wellington Park sign greeted us at the edge of the sclerophyll forest which looked like excellent habitat for fungi and snails but, like everywhere else, the forest was suffering the effects of “not enough rain”. We did find a fungus by the name of *Fistulina hepatica* or commonly, the “beef steak” fungus. This is a polypore that grows on wood and is edible. Its common name refers to the pinkish colouring top and bottom and the wrinkled upper surface which makes it look a bit like a hunk of meat (depends on how hungry you are as to how much it resembles a steak!!!).

This is also a Fungimap species and we were pleased to get a photo of a collection in such good condition. The only other fungal collection was a puffball - a species of the genus *Scleroderma*. We climbed up the fire trail, listening to bird calls and trying to keep Hugh out of the way of the jack jumpers which were especially abundant. The vegetation is very similar to that on Radfords track, with lots of *Richea pandanifolia*, *Cyathodes* species, *Tasmannia lanceolata* (mountain pepper) and *Telopea truncata* (Waratah). This is not surprising, seeing as we were at approximately the same altitude. Lunchtime saw us

at the summit and then we started naturalising in earnest. The swarm of flying insects was hard to identify until two met their fate in my cup of tea and were fished out and given to Kevin to take to Peter McQuillan.

Amanda found a very pretty jumping spider which actually remained still enough for her to photograph, unlike the butterflies which flitted off just as Robyn got "The Book" out. Kevin was challenged to find a snail at the top and shortly produced a microscopic mollusc with much glee. On the return, David, Kevin and I took the Myrtle Forest Track, hoping to encounter wetter conditions. Alas, the wet gully is a very dried up gully, many *Dicksonia antarctica* ferns were dead and *Bedfordia salicina* and *Olearia argophylla* shrubs were limp and desiccated. We did find four more fungi species but three of these are always in the same place so it wasn't a very fruitful excursion for fungi or snails.

Fungi list

<i>Fistulina hepatica</i>	<i>Scleroderma sp.</i>	<i>Paxillus muelleri</i>
<i>Scutellinia sp.</i>	<i>Phellinus wahlbergii</i>	<i>Xylaria polymorpha</i>

T.F.N.C Excursion for June 2001

"Knapping," as defined in Webster's dictionary, is to break or shape stones or flints by a quick, sharp blow. At this excursion, 13 Field Naturalists spent a very pleasant, interesting and informative 2 hours in the warm morning sun in the Bond Courtyard at the Tasmanian Museum. We were watching Kim Ackerman demonstrate the ancient craft of knapping. Chips of obsidian (volcanic glass), chert and glass flew around as he deftly manipulated another lump of rock, in this case dolerite, or a deer's antler to create an axe or knife capable of slicing through an animal hide with the ease of a sharp knife passing through soft butter, which he demonstrated on the spot!!

Using techniques called "direct" and "indirect" percussion and a more refined "pressure flaking" technique he created beautiful arrowheads, knives and axes with elaborate "bevelled" edges. Heat treating the rock will affect the internal structure and make the rock harder. The Aborigines were aware of this effect and had sophisticated methods of heating and cooling carried out in "kangaroo ovens". Kim said that from the ripples on a tool he could tell whether the knapper was left or right handed, whether he was sitting cross-legged, with one leg out in front or squatting. It is this glimpse of man in the past that fascinates Kim and indeed all of us who were present, although I think that Luis and Marc were more impressed with the sharpness of these stone implements and their potential as deadly weapons.

Mt Field Outing 6 May 01, report by Kevin Bonham

After her talk on sphagnum bogs, Jennie Whinnam was kind enough to lead us on a trip to see them in the field, Mt Field to be precise. About twelve Field Nats turned up and we walked around Lake Dobson and a short distance down the Lake Seal track. We saw a few small sphagnum patches around Lake Dobson, and Jennie was also soon instructing us on how to tell different *Richea* species apart and which ones only grow with sphagnum. The patches of sphagnum on the Lake Seal track - mostly growing in areas where underground boulders had impeded water drainage and produced conditions more suited to sphagnum than trees. We were able to see some of Jennie's old study sites where fenced-off sections demonstrated the effect of mammal grazing in promoting sphagnum over grasses. We had lunch at one of the larger sphagnum patches and then returned to the Lake Dobson carpark, where we were surprised to encounter ten Launceston Field Naturalists receiving a talk on alpine insects from Peter McQuillan! Among other natural history items, fungi were plentiful and diverse around the lake. Snails were not, but I did find *Roblinella* sp. "Tahune", a fairly common western Tasmanian snail which has never been recorded from Mt Field before. I also observed an example of change in the natural environment - on several visits in the 1980s I had seen galaxid fish in a deep creek which drains into Lake Dobson. On this visit the creek had silted up and the fish were nowhere to be seen.

Report on the Jewel Beetles Booklaunch

On Friday 20th July we at last officially launched the club's 3rd book in as many decades, this time *Jewel Beetles of Tasmania*. Around 60 members and friends gathered in the zoology gallery of the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, at least some striving to imitate the iridescence of the beetles in their attire.

Genevieve Gates, as colourful club president, introduced the speakers. Don Hird recounted the inception of the book some five years earlier, as a result of he and David Cowie, the author, meeting in the curatorial area of the Museum. Peter McQuillan, a former club president and leading Tasmanian entomologist spoke

of the diversity of beetles in general and the wealth of information yet to be recorded. David Cowie signed books with flourish, clearly proud of our joint achievement.

New Books in the Library

Jones, D., Wapstra, H., Tonelli, P. and Harris, S. *The Orchids of Tasmania*, Melbourne University Press, Vic., 1999. 408pp HB

A detailed guide to every known orchid in Tasmania. Introductory chapters on habitats, conservation and notes on orchids are followed by a key to the genera, and a key to orchid leaves. The book is clearly set out with a page devoted to each species, including its description, photograph and locality map. These are preceded by notes on the genus, often with explanatory drawings and for the larger genera, a key to the species.

Includes glossary, references, and index to the species and a checklist of the species, as well as an appendix on orchid taxa erroneously recorded for Tasmania.

Lane, P., Morris, D. and Shannon, G. *Common Grasses of Tasmania: An Agriculturalists' Guide*. Tasmanian Environment Centre, Hobart, 1999. 83pp pbk.

This book provides clear descriptions of the more common grasses in Tasmania, concentrating on those of agricultural significance. The descriptions are divided into three groupings, native/pasture, introduced/pasture and introduced/weed grasses. A double page spread is devoted to each species with a description and photograph of the plant as well as diagrams of identifying features. Although the book only covers a small proportion of the total number of species in the state, notes on similar species are included at the foot of each description. The book includes a glossary. Given that grasses form such an important component of our landscape, this is a useful guide.

Kantvilas, G. and Jarman, S.J. *Lichens of Rainforest in Tasmania and south-eastern Australia*. (Flora of Australian Supplementary Series Number 9.) Australian Biological Resources Study, Canberra, 1999. 212pp pbk.

The cool temperate rainforests in Tasmania provide habitat for a remarkable diversity of lichen flora. This book is both a guide to the lichens, beautifully illustrated by Bruce Fuhrer's clear photographs, and an introduction to their distribution, relationships, biology and the composition of the lichen flora and communities. Includes notes on identifying lichens, a key, glossary references and index.

Jarman, S. J. and Fuhrer, B. A. *Mosses and liverworts of rainforest in Tasmania and south-eastern Australia*. CSIRO and Forestry Tasmania, 1995. 134pp pbk.

This book is an introduction to the Bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) in cool temperate forests and other wet vegetation types. It is not an identification guide, and therefore does not contain scientific descriptions and keys, but is aimed at the non-specialist to increase awareness of a beautiful but largely neglected flora. Bruce Fuhrer's beautiful photographs should inspire us to take a closer look. Contains an index and glossary.

Kirkpatrick, J.B. and Harris, S. *The Disappearing Heath Revisited*. Tasmanian Environment Centre Inc. Hobart, 1999. 210pp pbk.

Chapters in this interesting book cover history, (including pre-human evolution of heath), ecology, different heath communities, the flora, significant species and conservation. Illustrated with line drawings by Georgina Davis and a few coloured photographs. A third of the book is taken up with appendices devoted to distribution maps and percentage frequency of species in particular communities.

Leaman, David. *Walk into History in Southern Tasmania*. Leaman Geophysics, Hobart, 1999. 282pp pbk.

This is not a conventional walking guide or a geology field guide, but an interesting mix, describing 64 reasonably accessible day walks in the southern region. Most of these walks are centered about Hobart and Mt Wellington, extending as far as Orford, Huon and Channel and Tasman Peninsula. They are not just walks but insights into the places in terms of their natural history, dependent on the underlying geology, as well as the more recent human history. The author also reviews several controversial planning issues and major developments where geology has been given inadequate attention, in the hope that such mistakes can be avoided in the future. Members who attended David's talk and outing last year will remember the Long Beach dune saga at Sandy Bay, and the issues vexing the cliffs at Tarooma.

The book is written in Leaman's easy and energetic style. The general information given in the front provides an understanding of the geology dealt with as a backdrop for everything else in the book. The book is well illustrated with coloured photographs, sketch maps and diagrams and also includes a glossary and index.

Perhaps the book will provide some interesting ideas for club outings...
